

# Three novellas set against Olympic Peninsula backdrop

Let's shine the spotlight on Ooligan Press this week. Based at Portland State University, Ooligan is a teaching press staffed by student apprentices in the school's Book Publishing Graduate Program.

The name derives from the Chinook jargon for candlefish, once abundant in Pacific Northwest rivers, and particularly valued for its oil. The conjecture is that when ooligan was traded with tribes beyond the region, the pronunciation was corrupted to oorigan ... which eventually became the name for the territory known as "Oregon." The ooligan has such high fat content that early explorers strung wicks through the

**"Three Sides Water"**  
By Peter Donahue  
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dried fish and burned them as candles.

Today, Ooligan Press sheds light on stories spawned out of the Northwest experience. And its latest book comes from Peter Donahue, a Winthrop, Wash.-based writer.

"Three Sides Water" contains three novellas, each set on a different coastline of the Olympic Peninsula, and each set in a different era, but all revolving around

characters who seek to define themselves despite the constraints of circumstance.

Donohue pays close attention to historical authenticity, which serves as the multi-hued warp for these richly woven stories.

## 'On Rialto Beach'

For his first story, "On Rialto Beach," Donahue summons the historical figure of Claude Alexander Conlin, a renowned magician in the 1920s who actually gave the beach its name.

The year is 1925, and Marguerite and her twin sister are on their annual retreat to the summer compound of their employer, Mr. Conlin, along with the

rest of his company. Mr. C bills himself as the world's greatest mentalist, but after years of serving as one of his stage assistants, Marguerite understands that her boss's psychic abilities depend largely on the advance intelligence he gathers from hired sleuths, as well as mechanical deceit and the public's gullibility.

If Mr. C actually could foretell events of importance, surely he wouldn't have hired the new crew member who brutally assaults Marguerite that summer on a remote stretch of beach. With no one around to come to her aid, Marguerite tries to fend off her attacker. And afterward, she keeps the degrading

episode to herself, not even confiding in her twin.

But as Marguerite discovers, disappearing acts sometimes happen in real life as well as on stage.

## 'At Fort Worden'

The second tale, "At Fort Worden," takes place in 1970. Avery has been convicted of a Category II offense and sent to Fort Worden Treatment Center where the "better class of delinquent" serves time. He navigates a world of authority figures, bullies and unlikely friends, and learns that there is more than one way to escape imprisonment.

## 'Out of Shelton'

And in the third novella,

"Out of Shelton," Chris leaves for Seattle to pursue the career his grandma had groomed him for since babyhood — as a Bing Crosby impersonator. But does success lead to fulfillment? He has to grapple with whether he wants his future to be based on someone else's past.

Kudos to Donahue for crafting three immensely consuming stories, and to Ooligan Press for bringing them into print.

*The BookMonger is Barbara Lloyd McMichael, who writes this weekly column focusing on the books, authors and publishers of the Pacific Northwest. Contact her at [bkmonger@nwlinc.com](mailto:bkmonger@nwlinc.com)*

## word nerd

By RYAN HUME  
FOR COAST WEEKEND

## CREST [KREST]

### noun

1. the top of a mountain or hill; summit
2. the frothy top of a wave as it breaks
3. the highest point of a river's swell
4. a tuft of hair, skin or bone on the head of an animal, such as a rooster's comb

5. a helmet, or the adornments on top of a helmet

6. generally, the highest point; also, a climax or culmination

7. in heraldry, a coat of arms

8. a popular brand of toothpaste and other oral hygiene products made and distributed by Proctor & Gamble

9. Astoria Crest Motel: an affordable 39-room motel with views of the Columbia River and downtown Astoria. Located on U.S. Highway 30 on the east edge of town, the majority of the rooms have recently



AARON BRENNAN PHOTO

A sweeping view of the Columbia River and Astoria Bridge from the Astoria Crest Motel, a hidden gem high up on the hill just off Old Highway 30.

been renovated and include a patio or balcony, as well

as access to a covered outdoor hot tub.

### verb

10. to reach a high point either physically or metaphorically

### Origin

Enters English about 1312. Borrowed from the Old French *creste*, which also means "tuft," "comb"

or "summit," to replace the Old English *hrīs*. The Old French developed out of the Latin *crista*, which also refers to an animal's tuft or a bird's plume and comes from the same roots as the Latin words for "hair," *crinis* and *crispus*. The Crest Motel opened above Mott Basin in Astoria in 1952 with 16 rooms. New owners Don and Wendy West and

Marshall and Patricia Doyle renamed the expanded property the Astoria Crest Motel amid renovations in 2014.

"(Jonathan White) explained how a crest takes 12 hours to form from high tide to high tide and low tide to low tide. 'The tide is a long, low wave that travels around the globe at 450 miles. It has no beginning and no end.'"

— Rebecca Herren, "The dynamics of tides," *Seaside Signal*, Friday, July 20, 2018

"The Astoria Crest Motel sits on nearly three acres, overlooking the mighty Columbia River, Astoria cityscape and the Astoria Bridge. Many locals and visitors alike believe this is the best view from any hotel/motel in the area."

— [astoriacrestmotel.com](http://astoriacrestmotel.com), accessed on Monday, July 23, 2018 

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